

Consumer News & Views

Published twice monthly

August 16, 2012



This issue is sponsored by.

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Will Consumers Spend More on Back-to-School Items?

Wallets will open a little wider than last year for students' back-to-school shopping reports Alyssa Creamer of *The Huffington Post*. However, retailers are bracing for consumers to also shop around for savings.

This year, college students and their families will spend \$907.22 during their school shopping sprees, according to the world's largest retail trade association, the National Retail Federation (NRF) and its 2012 Back-to-college Survey. That's an 11.5 percent increase from last year's purchase total's average of \$808.71.

The survey estimates back-to-college spending will reach \$53.3 billion. This means spending by college students and their families will comprise a majority percentage of total back-to-school costs projections, which is slated to hit \$83.8 billion this year - the figure is the sum of back-to-school shopping for both college-aged students and K-12 students.



Thomas Hinton, president of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization with over 130,000 members says, "We think the PriceGrabber Survey is more in line with what consumers will spend for back-to-school items in the coming months. Yes, spending will increase, but we think it's more in the 7% or 8% range, not 11%." The PriceGrabber online survey [see chart above] forecasts some 46% of consumers will spend more in 2012 on back-to-school items. The positive forecast is matched by more good news as reported by *The Wall Street Journal's* MarketWatch, which noted that Tuesday's Commerce Department report said retailers saw the first sales increase in the last three months in July.

For online retailers, it appears that when it comes to digital technology, college students, in particular, will seek more opportunities for finding supplies at the right price.

"Some college students and their parents may be hesitant to commit to any purchase without having researched whether or not they are getting the best deal beforehand," said Pam Goodfellow, director of BIGinsight Consumer Insights, a company reporting on consumer market trends. "This year every retailer could be a 'winner' as consumers will spread out their spending, leaving no retailer unturned."

Parents of K-12 students will spend an estimated \$688.62 on their children's school gear, according to the National Retail Federation [NRF], the world's largest retail trade association. Last year, parents spent \$603.63 - meaning parents are willing to spend about 13.2 percent more on school apparel, accessories, electronics and supplies.



ABCO Federal Credit Union is a federally-chartered financial institution headquartered in Rancocas, New Jersey. It was founded in 1959 as the Burlington County Teachers Federal Credit Union. Our first "deposit" was \$1.50 and we even had to borrow \$52 to buy our bookkeeping books and a hand-cranked adding machine. Our first members had to come to our garage to make deposits and take out loans.

ABCO has come a long way since 1959 and now serves members throughout the United States through its branch locations and website. Visit: <http://www.goabco.org> ABCO's primary member base is concentrated in central and southern New Jersey and consists of employees of the following groups and organizations:

- The American Consumer Council
- Boards of Education and teachers in colleges and universities in Atlantic, Burlington, Gloucester, and Cape May counties
- Hospitals and Casino employees
- Burlington County municipalities
- County and state workers
- New Jersey Consumer Council
- Many private employers

Family members can also join and use all ABCO services. Also, more and more businesses are offering ABCO membership as a benefit. ABCO membership is for life – even if a member moves or changes jobs – once a member, always a member! Join now!

Contact ABCO FCU at: 1-800-225-1859 or visit: <http://www.goabco.org/contact.cfm>

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Apple Desktops among Most Reliable, Consumer Reports Survey Says



Consumer Reports magazine's newest reader survey data for frequency of repair and serious problems with desktop computers is in—and again, Apple was among the most reliable brands. Computers tend to be among the most repair-prone products we test, but if you're shopping for a new desktop, picking a brand with a good repair history can improve your odds of getting a reliable model.

Consumer Reports asked readers who bought 8,007 desktops from 2009 through the first half of 2012 about their experiences and determined the percentage of models from each brand that were repaired or had a serious problem. Other brands included HP, Dell, and Gateway. Find out how they fared at www.ConsumerReports.org. *article by Carol Mangis*

ACC's Global Economic Outlook 2012: A Composite Forecast from the American Consumer Council and Other Sources.

Thomas Hinton, President of the American Consumer Council, a non-profit consumer education organization with over 130,000 members, offered the following forecast last month at ACC's mid-year meeting based on consumer trends and spending projections.

"As we look ahead for the next five to seven years, regardless of who is elected president we anticipate a pattern of slow, moderate growth for the United States, which is poised to lead the way in terms of global growth. Based on consumer spending data and surveys, the average annual growth rate starting in 2013 through 2018 will be in the 3.0 to 3.2% range.

While this is somewhat below the average of the last two decades, external factors including slowdowns in China and Europe will curb excessive economic growth in the United States with few industry exceptions. Those exceptions are healthcare, biosciences, financial services, green energy and most facets of technology. This bodes well for the United States, France, Germany and several Asian countries including Korea, Indonesia, Singapore and Japan, but not China, which will grow, but also struggle as it tries to balance consumer demand with inflation and government-sponsored spending.

The greatest challenge we face in the United States is job growth and retraining Baby Boomers to perform technical, engineering, medical and environmental work, which is where the job growth will be in the next ten years.”

Green CSM Certification Accepting Applications for 2012 Summer Cycle:

If your company or organization would like to increase its credibility with consumers, you should consider applying for the **Green CSM Certification**. Applications for the 2012 Summer cycle are now being accepted through August 31, 2012.

It's a proven fact that consumers want to do business with companies that are eco-friendly and practice Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The process is straight-forward and all applicants are recognized by ACC and the Green USA Institute.

All applicants complete the criteria and submit their responses to ACC's Green Consumer Council for review, assessment and feedback. Program details and the **Green CSM Certification** criteria can be viewed at ACC's website located at: <http://americanconsumercouncil.org/greenc.asp>

